

## Sports

# Thomas holds off Cantlay to win with record at Medinah

## Japan's Hideki Matsuyama finished third on 268

WASHINGTON: Justin Thomas captured his 10th career US PGA title on Sunday, holding off fellow American Patrick Cantlay down the back nine to win the BMW Championship in record-smashing fashion.

The 2017 PGA Championship winner seized his first triumph since last year's WGC Bridgestone Invitational, defeating Cantlay by three strokes, and claimed the top spot in the US PGA playoff point standings entering next week's season-ending Tour Championship.

"I was really nervous today," said Thomas, who began the day with a six-stroke advantage. "It's hard to play with the lead. I was enjoying it though. I forgot how hard it is to win. That's why it has taken this long. I've been working hard to get back to it and it feels great."

Thomas fired a four-under par 68 to finish 72 holes at Medinah on 25-under 263, shattering the former mark of 23-under at the 116-year-old event shared by American Dustin Johnson and Australian Marc Leishman.

Thomas birdied four of the last eight holes at the suburban Chicago layout to fend off Cantlay, who closed with birdies on four of the last six holes and nine birdies in all. "I just stayed patient," Thomas said. Patrick made that very interesting. I hit the ball so bad to start the day. I couldn't hit a fairway. That was a hard start."

After seeing his lead shrink to two shots, Thomas landed his approach two feet from the cup at 11 to set up a birdie and surged to the finish. "That birdie on 11 was huge," he said. "It kind of propelled me."

Thomas, who won the 2017 FedEx Cup playoff crown, made himself the player to beat in next week's Tour Championship at East Lake in Atlanta. Thomas will start at 10-under par with a two-stroke lead over second-place point producer Cantlay in next week's event under a new points format that ensures the tournament winner will capture the playoff crown. For Thomas, that means sitting on a

lead for four days before he swings a club. "I'm just going to go out there and try and play as well as I can," Thomas said. "I'm going to try not to look at the leaderboard. I've got to drive the ball a whole lot better than I did this week." Japan's Hideki Matsuyama finished third on 268 after his second 63 in three days, a third-round 73 spoiling his title bid. He needed only 20 putts Sunday. American Tony Finau finished fourth on 270, one shot ahead of countryman Brandt Snedeker and Spain's Jon Rahm.

But Finau's 69 was not enough for him to overtake Bryson DeChambeau for the final automatic berth on the US team for December's Presidents Cup in Australia, qualifying for which ended Sunday.

### TENSE DOWN THE STRETCH

Thomas opened with a bogey and even with tap-in birdies at the par-5 fifth and seventh holes saw his lead shrink to only two over Cantlay after he also made bogey at 10. The tap-in birdie by Thomas at 11 was followed by Thomas matching Cantlay's 15-foot birdie putt at the par-3 13th with a 12-foot birdie putt of his own to stay three ahead. Cantlay lipped out a seven-foot birdie putt at 14 then drove the green at the par-4 15th but missed a 17-foot eagle putt. Thomas and Cantlay each birdied 15 and Cantlay botched a four-foot par putt at 16 to leave Thomas four ahead with two holes remaining.

Cantlay sank an 18-foot birdie putt at the par-3 17th and a 38-footer for birdie at 18 but Thomas closed with a 14-foot birdie for the win. Players who moved into the final 30-man Tour Championship field by their results at Medinah included Matsuyama, 2009 US Open winner Lucas Glover and fellow American Jason Kokrak. Tiger Woods, last year's Tour Championship winner, and Jordan Spieth were among those unable to claw their way back into the top-30 in order to qualify for East Lake. — AFP



MEDINAH: Justin Thomas of the United States celebrates with girlfriend Jillian Wisniewski and the Wadley Cup after winning during the final round of the BMW Championship at Medinah Country Club No. 3 in Medinah, Illinois. — AFP

## 'Frightening' Archer can be England's next superstar

LONDON: There have been few more explosive test debuts than the one made by England's Jofra Archer in the second match of the Ashes series against Australia at Lord's. Although England failed to win the match, Archer's hostile spell on the fourth day served notice that the 24-year-old Barbados-born fast bowler has the ability to enjoy a stellar career.

The bare statistics do not tell the whole story. Archer took two wickets in the first innings and three in the second as Australia limped to 154 for six to force a draw on Sunday and remain 1-0 up in the series.

But he left a trail of devastation in his wake, hitting Australia's leading batsman Steve Smith with a sickening blow to the neck which forced him to retire hurt. Smith returned to the crease but awoke on Sunday morning suffering from concussion symptoms which ruled him out of the rest of the match.

Archer also struck Smith on the forearm and Marnus Labuschagne, test cricket's first substitute in place of Smith, on the helmet with the second ball he faced. His team mates were impressed.

"Out on the field Jofra has clearly made a big impact," England captain Joe Root said. "The dynamic he adds to the bowling attack is fantastic. What a couple of brilliant spells we have seen from him already! It is an exciting prospect, going into the rest of the series."

England all-rounder Ben Stokes described Archer's performance as "frightening". "I am not sure there will be a better debut in terms of announcing yourself in the team," Stokes said. "The spell was incredible to watch. We are very lucky he is in our team. He gives you an extra dimension." Many of the Australian team have played with Archer in the Indian premier League and



Jofra Archer

had known what to expect. "It didn't surprise us," captain Tim Paine said. "We've seen Jofra in Australia for a few years now. We know the package he brings. It's something every team wants to have."

Archer contributed hugely to England's World Cup victory this year, bowling the Super Over in the final

against New Zealand, and has the potential to make an even bigger impact in the longest format of the game.

"With Archer, I am excited for the next few years of test match cricket. We have got a superstar," former England captain Michael Vaughan, who led his team to victory in the 2005 Ashes, told the BBC. — Reuters

## Quick turnaround may see Smith miss third Ashes Test

MELBOURNE: Batsman Steve Smith must be free of concussion symptoms for 24 hours before he can begin return to play protocols, Australia's sports medicine manager has said, making him a doubt for the third Ashes test starting on Thursday.

Smith suffered a sickening blow to the neck from a Jofra Archer bouncer during the second test at Lord's, forcing him off the ground for a medical assessment.

The right-hander returned to the crease 40 minutes later before being dismissed for 92 but he was then ruled out of the final day's play and replaced by Marnus Labuschagne, who became test cricket's first concussion substitute.

With the third test starting at Headingley in Leeds on Thursday, time may be Smith's biggest enemy.

"He needs to be symptom free for 24 hours before he even gets to start the process," Cricket Australia's Alex Kountouris told reporters in Melbourne yesterday.

"So he is just recovering and sleeping, taking some time to feel better then after that he begins the process but there is obviously a very short time before the next test."

Kountouris added that the decision on when Smith was able to return would be made solely by team doctor Richard Saw, who would follow the Cricket Australia protocols.

Saw made the decision to take Smith

from the field on Saturday and, after a series of tests indicated no signs of concussion, allowed the batsman to continue his innings.

Smith, however, had developed symptoms overnight and after further testing on Sunday, which is part of the process, Saw ruled him out of the fifth day.

"Delayed concussions are reasonably common," Kountouris added. "About 30% of concussions are delayed. So it's not uncommon and why we test the players the next day."

Kountouris added that any criticism about allowing Smith to return to the crease was misguided, given he had not presented with any signs.

"Everything he (Saw) did was according to the protocol," Kountouris said. "At the time Steve did not have a concussion. He was fine to play. If we left him out of the game it would have been for only what we saw on the field."

"The reality is that only about one in five or six head impacts end up being concussions, which is why we monitor them. If you look at that game there were three other head impacts and only Steve developed a concussion."

"If we pulled every player out who had a head impact we'd be pulling out 80% of the players who don't have a concussion. That would be an over reaction."

The second test ended in a draw, with Australia leading the series 1-0 after winning the opener at Edgbaston. — Reuters

## Sharjeel says sorry in bid to resurrect Pakistan career

LAHORE: Disgraced former Pakistan opener Sharjeel Khan took the first step towards resurrecting his career yesterday by apologising for indulging in the spot-fixing in 2017 that earned him a five-year ban.

The 30-year-old met with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) anti-corruption officials who directed him to undergo a rehabilitation programme, putting him on track to return to the sport.

"I offer my unconditional apology to the PCB, my teammates, fans and family for the irresponsible conduct that brought embarrassment to everyone," Sharjeel was quoted as saying in a PCB press release.

"I request for forgiveness and assure I will show more responsibility in my future actions," he said.

The left-hander was a rising star and playing in the second edition of the Pakistan Super League in Dubai when he was charged with deliberately not scoring on two balls at a certain time of the match in return for money from bookies.

Pakistan has a long and sordid history of spot-fixing — where a specific part of a game is rigged, as opposed to match-fixing, where the whole result is.

Half of Khan's ban was suspended.

The PCB said he has been given a roadmap to revive his career.

"Sharjeel has completed his two and a half years of ineligibility and will now complete rehabilitation before the end of the year and then reintegrate into top level cricket," the statement said.

The rehabilitation, among other things, will also include attending and delivering lectures on the PCB Anti-Corruption Code.

Khan will also have to visit orphanages as part of community service, and participate in integration sessions with Pakistan's national players and support personnel.

In his statement, Khan reminded fellow players to "strictly and religiously" follow the PCB's anti-corruption code.

He said he planned to return first to club cricket as he needed time to build up his fitness and form.

At the time of the ban, Sharjeel had played one Test, 25 one-day internationals and 15 T20 matches. — AFP



Sharjeel Khan

## England unchanged for third Test

LONDON: England named an unchanged squad yesterday for this week's third Test against Australia at Headingley. The injured James Anderson, England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, will continue his bid to return later in the series by playing in a county 2nd XI match starting today.

England's selectors kept faith with the XI that drew the rain-affected second Ashes Test at Lord's on Sunday, with the hosts having the better of an exciting last day before Australia held out to preserve their 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

Surrey left-arm seamer Sam Curran, who did not play at Lord's, retained his place in a 12-man squad for the third Test, which starts at England captain Joe Root's Headingley home ground on Thursday.

With just a four-day turnaround between Tests in London and Leeds, major changes were always unlikely. Now England will hope that is sufficient time for World Cup-winning fast bowler Jofra Archer, who took five wickets while repeatedly topping speeds of 90 mph on his Test debut, to recover from the 44 overs he sent

down at Lord's. Anderson did not play in the second Test because of a calf injury that restricted him to just four overs in Australia's 251-run win in the series opener at Edgbaston. He is, however, to step his rehabilitation this week by playing for Lancashire 2nd XI against Leicestershire in a three-day friendly match in Liverpool.

Anderson's fitness will be assessed continually ahead of the fourth Test at his Old Trafford home ground starting on September 4. While England's fallible top order remains a concern — World Cup-winning opener Jason Roy has made just 40 runs in four innings this series — the selectors have resisted the temptation to bring in new faces.

They were under less pressure to make changes after the uncapped duo of Dom Sibley and Zak Crawley, considered to be of the best young openers in England, were both out for low scores on Sunday.

Sibley got a duck for Warwickshire against Somerset on Sunday and Kent batsman Crawley was dismissed for just five against Essex.

### England squad

Rory Burns (Surrey), Jason Roy (Surrey), Joe Root (Yorkshire, capt), Joe Denly (Kent), Ben Stokes (Durham), Jos Buttler (Lancashire), Jonny Bairstow (Yorkshire, wkt), Chris Woakes (Warwickshire), Jofra Archer (Sussex), Stuart Broad (Nottinghamshire), Jack Leach (Somerset), Sam Curran (Surrey). — Reuters